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CAUSERIE DU SOIR

THE STOCKHOLM MUSEUM

LUCIEN SIMON

LUCIEN SIMON

BY ANNA SEATON-SCHMIDT

THE twenty-six paintings by Lucien Simon, which were shown in the Annual Exhibition of the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh,* were a revelation, not only of his personal genius, but of the sanity and sobriety of contemporary French Art. The dazzling acrobatic feats of post-impressionists, cubists and orphists have so bewildered our American public as to create the impression that all French art is in a state of frenzied revolution. An exhibition of this kind was necessary to convince many that the great traditions of France still persist in the work of such men as Albert Besnard,

*This same collection is now on exhibition in the Albright Gallery, Buffalo.

Charles Cottet, René Ménard and Lucien Simon. Their acceptance as leaders in the art world of Paris is proof of the vitality and endurance of the old French ideals and should make us realize that Matisse and his followers are taken more seriously in our country than in France—where artists are so eager for new truths, new scientific discoveries, that the strongest, most startling innovators are welcomed in the hope that something great and wonderful is about to be developed. But while they admire the venturesome spirit of young enthusiasts they seldom accept their theories. The French are idealists and on the surface seem easily influenced; in reality, they possess a

lucid, critical judgment which prevails in the final analysis, otherwise they could never have produced the marvelous art of the cathedral builders, of the "Men of 1830," of Puvis de Chavannes or Rodin—each so different, yet all belonging to the same art-evolution. True, growth has always come through the individual genius working quietly, persistently, to express in his own way his individual emotions; but since the artist is extremely sensitive to his environment he is necessarily influenced by those invisible forces that shape the destinies of each age and unconsciously reflects them in his work. "We artists," said Dagnan-Bouveret, "do but reproduce the emotions, the thoughts of our period. Michelangelo was a profound thinker, he saw far beyond the vision of ordinary mortals and in his work revealed the spiritual history of his age."

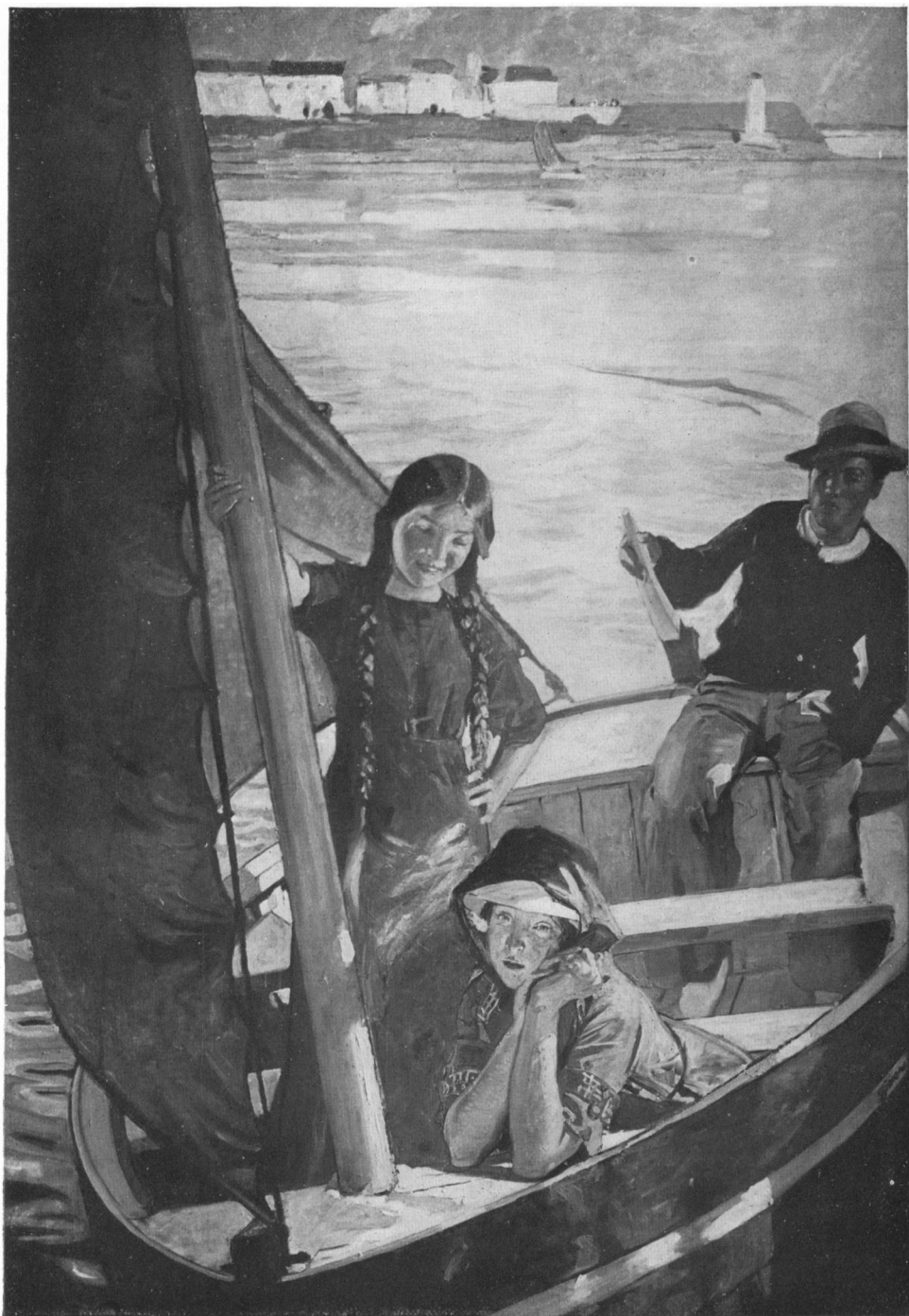
"Modern French democracy will leave in its paintings a portrait of itself," wrote Theodore Child, "which will be precise, absolute; for that which evidently most interests the French painter and the French public is living life, nature, reality, modernity." The incoherencies and unrest of our formative period are doubtless mirrored in the chaotic, transitory work of cubists, and futurists, while the beautiful normal home life of France will be perpetuated in such earnest, sincere paintings as those of Lucien Simon.

Born in Paris in 1861, he received his education in the finest schools of that great metropolis. Belonging to the rich *bourgeoisie*, many of his family connections and friends were among the most distinguished artists and savants of the new Republic and the boy grew up in an atmosphere of culture and refinement that has necessarily influenced his art. When in college he hoped to become a scientist, his eldest brother, Eugène Simon, having already achieved distinction as a naturalist; he also inclined to literature and was passionately devoted to music. These varied tastes never interfered with his love of design, of painting, and every spare hour was given up to what he then considered his happiest

pastime. Once out of college his natural instincts led him to study drawing in the Julian Academy and shortly after to rent a studio, believing that in art as in life each individual must work out his own salvation according to the light vouchsafed him; soon the independence and absolute sincerity of his work appealed to the older artists and they predicted a brilliant career for the young painter. Fortunately, he married a woman who shared his high ideals. The sister of André Dauchez and herself a painter of no mean ability, Madame Simon has been able to appreciate and assist the development of her husband's sensitive, artistic temperament and to share his enthusiasm for all that is noblest and most enduring in French art. There is no more delightful coterie in Paris than that which gathers in their beautiful home on the Rue Cassini where the weekly meetings, for which Simon's bachelor studio was famous, still take place. Desvallières, Blanche, Ménard, Cottet and many other well-known painters mingle in friendly intercourse with musicians, writers and men of science, discussing, as only Frenchmen can, the burning questions of the day.

Simon once told me that there was an old tradition in France that a man's art should be his wife, that it was impossible for great artists to lead normal lives, saying that he and his friends could not agree to this, as they had found a home, and all that it stands for, of immense help and inspiration in their work. Had he never experienced such joys the world would have lost some of the most charming pictures of French home life. A devoted husband and father, his paintings, like those of Carrière, are faithful records of French character, above all of that exquisite tenderness of parents for their children which is one of the most beautiful traits of the race.

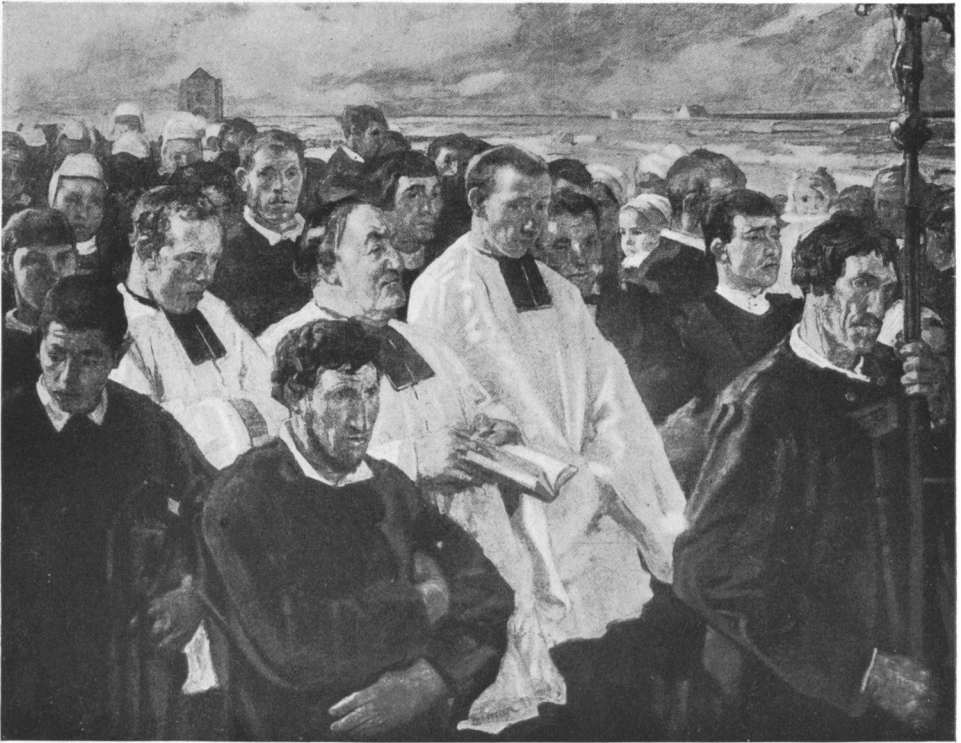
For many years Simon's family have proved his best models. Trained to it from babyhood, the young people pose *à la perfection*. They take a deep interest in their father's pictures and can be recognized in many of his most famous paintings; "The Mother's Kiss,"



LA BARCA

THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART, VENICE

LUCIEN SIMON



LA PROCESSION

THE LUXEMBOURG MUSEUM

LUCIEN SIMON

"The Pursuit," "Portrait of Mlle. L. S.," "Little Girl with Tulips" and "The First Communicants" are among those recently exhibited in Pittsburgh.

Happily for Simon, he has never known the terrible poverty and suffering that darkened Carrière's life and overshadowed his loveliest pictures with a premonition of tragedy—the love of Carrière's mothers is always fraught with anguish, their passionate kisses mingled with fear of what the future may hold for their beloved ones. Simon's pictures of maternity, on the contrary, portray only happy, protected motherhood, women whose tender caresses are undimmed by sorrowful forebodings. Both artists are poets, but the minor note, born of Carrière's bitter sufferings, is as yet unheard in the happy home songs of Lucien Simon, especially those which tell of the gayety and happiness of the average adored French child in the peaceful seclusion of his home.

These precious documents of *bourgeois* life reveal but one side of this artist's character—his Brittany pictures are their necessary complement. Here we find the boldness of the experimenter in color and atmospheric effects. A bigness and vitality of brushwork and the penetrating vision of the psychologist, especially in his Bigoudin paintings.

No people belong more absolutely to their surroundings than do the picturesque peasants and fisherfolk of this remote corner of France to their gray dunes and desolate, rocky coast, swept by the fierce storms and relentless waves of the Atlantic. Their somber, primitive life appealed so strongly to Simon's imagination that he built a summer home at Pont l'Abbé, Finistère, where he now spends half of each year. In spite of their intercourse with other Bretons the Bigoudins, drifting here from Asia in prehistoric times, have preserved the strange customs and gorgeous costumes



LE BAL A L'ILE TUDY

LUCIEN SIMON

of their Chinese ancestors, whose prominent cheek bones, narrow eyes and yellow complexions still persist on this Breton coast. Converted to Christianity in the second or third century the poetry of this old race expresses itself in religious processions and ceremonies. Simon's paintings, representations of their grandiose austerity, are among the most brilliant of his achievements. It was one of these Breton pictures that opened for him the portals of the "New Salon" in 1893. Until that time he had exhibited in the Salon des Artistes Français, where he had received many honors. As his talent matured, however, he realized that his work belonged with that of Cottet, Rodin, Besnard, all that group of men who had broken away from academic traditions in founding the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts. Simon's work was received with acclamation and he was immediately requested to join the Society. Here no medals are

given—to be made Sociétaire is the highest attainable honor—but the Exposition of 1900 awarded him a gold medal and the Minister of Fine Arts decorated him with the Legion of Honor. The following year his "Procession at Penmarc'h" was purchased by the French Government. The technique of his painting is virile and brilliant, but these qualities alone could never have won the universal praise accorded this picture of rough, ignorant peasants. It was the underlying poetry, raising this work above the mere manner of painting into the higher atmosphere of art, that compelled the wondering admiration of his fellow artists. There is nothing in the rugged faces to suggest models posing for a picture, they are intensely human men and women absorbed in the performance of a religious ceremony. Since the placing of this powerfully interpreted page of Breton life in the Luxembourg Gallery, honors have poured in on Simon



LA BEAUPRÉ (A FRAGMENT)

LUCIEN SIMON

from all parts of Europe and America. The foremost critics now assign him a high rank among modern painters. "There are few," writes Gabriel Mourey, "who display more conspicuously certain of those qualities which may be regarded as the most precious a painter can possess; clearness, striking independence of vision, spontaneity and a truly prodigious freedom of expression, in a word, gifts of plastic perception and expression in all their fullness." And Achille Segard does not hesitate to say that "His work is a durable monument,

since it has been built up on foundations of patience, of knowledge and of love."

An indefatigable worker, an earnest searcher after truth, Lucien Simon is ever striving to attain a broader vision, a more perfect expression of the universal truths that underlie all human character. His pictures are a faithful presentment of that which appeals most strongly to him in French life—the home, family affection, religious belief, and are worthy the high praise accorded them by Rodin who told me that he placed Simon among the two or three great artists of France.

AN ART SCHOOL IN AN INDUSTRIAL CENTER

THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED DESIGN OF THE CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY

BY GLENDINNING KEEBLE

THERE are features of unique value in the organization and aims of the School of Applied Design of the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. The breadth of its scope, the generosity of its equipment, the variety of its resources, the thoroughness of its methods, are new in the field of artistic training. It combines general culture with the usual technical instruction in isolated arts; it offers in single, consistent courses those mixed arts which usually must be studied at various and antagonistic sources; and it has exceptional opportunities for entering upon subjects which, because of their complexity, are generally ignored by schools and left to be mastered incidentally during the press of wage-earning. The essence of the peculiar value of this school, which seems to promise a new epoch in art instruction, is symbolized by the fact that it is housed in what is probably the only building in this country especially designed to receive students of all the major arts.

We may consider the building first from an objective standpoint. The more or less public portion forms a nucleus, so to speak, to the actual school building, which encloses it on three sides—a plan uniting interior convenience with exterior simplicity and strength, and ensuring a maximum of light and air in the class rooms. The severity of the façade of the central portion is relieved by five large niches, decorated with architectural details in the five principal styles of historic ornament. Above them are tablets bearing the titles of the five main departments the school is designed to include—music, drama, architecture, painting and sculpture.

The main entrance, through the central niche, leads into an imposing foyer. To the right is a fully equipped theater, without galleries, of which the sloping floor has a capacity of 450 persons; to the left is an exhibition room of equal size. Beyond these two lies a suite of smaller museums of the decorative arts, and then a broad transverse corridor, in-